

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3896

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3810

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ET

SUBJ: MOFA BRIEFING ON FONMIN'S RECENT TRIP TO EAST AFRICA

REF: ADDIS 3045

ACTING HEAD MOFA'S AFRICAN/MIDDLE EAST DEPARTMENT, ASSEFA LEGESSE,
WHO ACCOMPANIED FONMIN ON SUBJECT TRIP, BRIEFED POL COUNSELOR
MARCH 28 ON SUBSTANCE OF CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN FONMIN AND HIS
INTERLOCUTORS. GIST AS FOLLOWS:

1. ACCORDING SOURCE, FONMIN CONVEYED FOLLOWING KEY POINTS TO HIS
INTERLOCUTORS IN ALL CAPITALS VISITED:

A) ERITREAN PROBLEM IS INTERNAL ETHIOPIAN MATTER. IT MUST
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BE SETTLED INTERNALLY OR, AT MINIMUM, IN ACCORDANCE PERTINENT

OAU CHARTER PROVISIONS.

B) ERITREANS AND ETHIOPIANS ARE ETHNICALLY, RELIGIOUSLY AND LINGUISTICALLY SO CLOSELY RELATED AS TO BE ONE PEOPLE. INDEED, ETHIOPIAN CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE WAS BORN IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIA.

C) BECAUSE OF ERITREA'S RECENT HISTORY, INCLUDING ITS COLONIAL OCCUPATION BY ITALY, ITS PLACE WITHIN ETHIOPIA PRESENTS SPECIAL PROBLEMS. THE EPMG, HOWEVER, INTENDS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THUS POSED WITH A VIEW ALSO TOWARDS THE REQUIREMENTS OF ETHIOPIA'S OTHER PROVINCES.

D) WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ETHIOPIAN "UNITY," VIZ., ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, AND BEARING IN MIND NEED MAKE SOLUTION ERITREAN PROBLEM COMPATIBLE WITH NEEDS OF OTHER ETHIOPIAN PROVINCES, EPMG IS PREPARED MAKE CONCESSIONS TO MEET ERITREAN ASPIRATIONS.

2. FONMIN EXPLAINED, ASSEFA SAID, THAT EPMG'S THINKING ABOUT GOVERNMENT REFORM IN ETHIOPIA CENTERS ON THE DEVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY TO ITS CONSTITUENT PARTS. GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE SITUATION, THE EPMG IS PREPARED TO OFFER TO IMPLEMENT EVENTUAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR LOCAL SELF-ADMINISTRATION FIRST IN ERITREA. THE EPMG, MOREOVER, INTENDS TO SHAPE THE APPLICATION OF ITS POLICY TO ERITREAN REALITIES, WHICH ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OBTAINING IN OTHER PROVINCES, BUT ONLY WITHIN THE LIMITS OF NATIONAL UNITY. IN OTHER WORDS, ERITREA WOULD STILL HAVE TO FIT INTO A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNANCE COMPATIBLE WITH THAT TO BE APPLIED TO ALL THE OTHER PROVINCES OF THE COUNTRY.

3. ACCORDING TO ASSEFA, THIS POSITION WAS RECEIVED WITH UNDERSTANDING IN ALL THE CAPITALS VISITED. KENYATTA EXPRESSED HIS SYMPATHY FOR THESE ETHIOPIAN VIEWS AND OFFERED KENYAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO THE EPMG. ASSEFA MUSED THAT KENYATTA LIKELY REMAINS CONCERNED OVER SOMALI INTENTIONS VIS-A-VIS BOTH KENYA AND ETHIOPIA AND SAW NO SUBSTITUTE FOR KENYAN-ETHIOPIAN SOLIDARITY. NYERERE DID NOT RECEIVE FONMIN KIFLE WHO, INSTEAD, SAW SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT KAWAWA. ASSEFA SPECULATED THAT NYERERE WAS PROVIDING HIMSELF WITH SOME POLITICAL MANEUVERING ROOM IN ASKING KAWAWA TO RECEIVED THE ETHIOPIAN FONMIN. NYERERE HAD, AFTER ALL, OPENLY ESPOUSED THE BIAFRAN SECESSION. IN NOW SUPPORTING ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY HE WAS, THEREFORE, TURNING TANZANIAN FOREIGN POLICY ABOUT, AS IT WERE. KAWAWA, NEVERTHELESS, DID OFFER THE TANZANIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT TO THE EPMG. KENNETH KAUNDA ALSO GAVE ASSURANCES OF ZAMBIAN SUPPORT TO FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO.

4. THE BIG SURPRISE CAME IN KAMPALA. "IDI AMIN, WITH WHOM WE SPENT TWO INTERESTING HOURS, TOLD US EVERYTHING WE WANTED TO HEAR," ASSEFA SAID. SPECIFICALLY, PRESIDENT AMIN ASSURED THE ETHIOPIAN FONMIN, ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, THAT HIS EARLIER POSITION IN FAVOR OF THE ERITREAN INSURGENCY HAD BEEN TAKEN AS

A RESULT OF MISINFORMATION FED TO HIM BY ILL-INTENTIONED PEOPLE (UNSPECIFIED). NOT ONLY DID HE (AMIN) SUPPORT ETHIOPIAN UNITY -- HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO TRAVEL TO THE ARAB CAPITALS DIRECTLY CONCERNED IN ORDER TO USE HIS INFLUENCE TO SUPPORT THE EPMG IN ITS EFFORTS TO PRESERVE IT. ASKED TO WHAT HE ASCRIBED THIS REMARKABLE SHIFT IN THE UGANDAN PRESIDENT'S LINE, ASSEFA OPINED THAT "HE WANTS THE OAU CHAIRMANSHIP SO BADLY HE CAN TASTE IT." WHATEVER AMIN'S MOTIVES, ASSEFA SAID, THE EPMG COULD ONLY BE PLEASED AT THE POSITION HE HAD TAKEN IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH FONMIN KIFLE.

5. ASSEFA HINTED THAT THE EPMG INTENDED TO CONTINUE ITS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS BY SENDING DELEGATIONS TO OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES PRIOR TO NEXT SUMMER'S OAU MEETINGS.

6. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE THAT, HOWEVER GLACIALLY, EPMG MAY BE BEGINNING TO INCH TOWARDS THE IDEA OF SOME SPECIAL CONCESSIONS TO THE ERITREANS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE EPMG LINE DESCRIBED ABOVE STILL SEEMS TO ALLOW ONLY ROOM FOR CONCESSIONS LIKELY TO FALL WELL SHORT OF THOSE WHICH WOULD ENGAGE INSURGENT INTEREST IN NEGOTIATIONS.

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